



TO CULL OR NOT TO CULL

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Many times I have asked myself this question, should I cull this rabbit or give it more time to develop? How do I know what rabbits to keep and which rabbits to cull? Questions like this will be some of the toughest to answer as well as the most important decisions we will make as rabbit breeders.

Well, let's take a step back and decide what your goals are as a breeder of New Zealands. Answering the following questions will help in deciding which rabbits stay and which rabbits leave. Before any of us can become successful evaluators of our rabbits we must understand the breed standard. This is our guide to producing the "Perfect" New Zealand. Once we have that ideal rabbit in our mind, we are then ready to apply that image to the rabbits we produce.

Is your goal to produce the best fryers for meat pen competition or is it to produce the best breeding stock for the show table. Either of these goals is attainable but each end result will have a different approach to evaluating and culling your rabbits. If you decide to produce winning fryers for meat pen competition, your goal will be to produce rabbits that look their absolute best at 10 weeks of age. Culling rabbits for this purpose takes less time and pen space. If your goal is to produce the best breeding stock for the show table then culling your rabbits at ten weeks of age will not work as you now will be producing rabbits that will look their best at 6-10 months of age. How and when you cull is affected by your end product. If your rabbits develop early in life (3-5 months) you will need less time to grow out these rabbit's vs. if your rabbits develop later in life (4-7 months), where you will need more time to decide which rabbits to cull and which rabbits to keep. Do you have enough grower space? This is especially important for those breeders who will raise breeding stock for the show table. The rule of thumb is to have 12 grower holes for every brood doe in the herd. This will provide enough space to properly grow out and evaluate 2-3 litters per year. Most rabbit breeders will try to cull too early and not give enough time to for their rabbits to mature. If you want to produce the best looking juniors then culling early will work but if you want to produce rabbits that look their best as 6-8's or seniors then growing out and culling later will produce the best results.

The bottom line is you will need to develop the art of evaluating and understand the development of your rabbits. **YOU BE THE JUDGE!** The success of your breeding program will depend on your ability to decide who, "To Cull or Not to Cull".